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The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the **Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)**.

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

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Growing Drought Brings Dust Storms, Fires

[About half the country is currently experiencing drought conditions](#) ranging from moderate to exceptional, according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), with Texas and California being hardest hit. Some areas have suffered through drought since 2011 and parts of the nation are drier than they were during the 1930s Dust Bowl.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), [dust storm warnings are up](#). Lubbock, Texas, has had 15 dust storms since the beginning of the year. The NWS is expanding their dust storm forecast areas to include southern Colorado.

The drought also [increases the likelihood and severity of wildfires](#). Easier to ignite, faster to spread, and more difficult to extinguish (especially as water supplies run low), states affected by drought report twice as many wildfires as the average from the same months in previous years. Several [wildfires sparked near San Diego](#) in the past weeks, causing massive evacuation notices and burning thousands of acres.

Oddly enough, power outages are also sometimes caused by drought as dust builds up on lines. The dust, when mixed with moisture like morning mist, can [spark and catch utility poles on fire](#), burning transformers and shorting out lines.

A [drought is a complex emergency](#) bringing with it a variety of complications. In addition to the items above, communities in affected drought areas face economic hardship, water conservation issues, and farming and agricultural hardships. The [National Drought Resilience Partnership](#), begun in late 2013, will be working to help address these issues. Some resources can be found on their website.

(Source: [U.S. Drought Monitor](#))

Legal Aspects of Public Health Emergencies

The Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWCPHP) has a new free online course focused on the uncertainties and restrictions of public health legal issues during emergencies. “[Legal Aspects of Public Health Emergency Preparedness](#)” provides a summary of legal matters to think about when managing public health and healthcare services in an emergency situation.

“During emergencies, public health agencies need to know what powers public health officials will have, when they can request assistance from other jurisdictions, and how they will handle volunteers.” Public health workers must work within the

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For information specifically affecting the private sector critical infrastructure contact the **National Infrastructure Coordinating Center** by phone at **202-282-9201**, or by email at **nicc@dhs.gov**.

constraints of managing privacy and civil rights while still performing their job of maintaining public health and safety.

This course is for public health workers and attorneys who work with emergency preparedness programs. Participants will learn:

- How to identify legal authority at different levels of government;
- Understand potential or actual legal powers, responsibilities, and risks during declared emergencies; and
- Describe legal questions relating to medical or public health volunteers.

The NWCPHP offers many other [courses, webinars, and trainings on their website](#).

(Source: [NWCPHP](#))

The Power of Homeowners to be Fire Adapted

Wildfire season is off and running already this year with many states reporting significant wildfire activity. A California wildfire last week forced over 20,000 people to evacuate, and a Texas wildfire recently destroyed 75 homes.

Departments in communities with a wildfire risk should be actively working with their residents to mitigate and lessen wildfire hazards through programs like [Ready, Set, Go!](#), [Firewise](#), and [Fire Adapted Communities](#).

A new public-service announcement from the Ready, Set, Go! program highlights the whole-community concept when dealing with wildfire mitigation and preparation. "[Hero in You](#)" shows a fire officer responding to a wildfire and explaining to a young boy along the way that the work his mother is doing is helping to keep them all safe.

Encouraging homeowners to take an active role by clearing flammable debris and understanding their wildfire dangers helps the community as a whole. Communities will be safer and, in the long run, so will first responders.

(Source: [IAFC](#))

U.S. Indicts Foreign Officers in Cyber Attacks

This week, the [United States indicted five Chinese military officers for economic espionage through computer hacking](#) against several American companies. This is the first such indictment against foreign government officials. The case centers on the state-sponsored theft of trade secrets or communications, giving Chinese companies an economic advantage through cyber espionage.

Experts stress this type of activity is ongoing in [hundreds of companies every day](#). The private security firm Mandiant says "a typical corporate cyberattack goes on for about 230 days before the company realizes something is wrong." [Foreign industrial espionage may be the single greatest threat](#) to the American technology sector, and [a cybersecurity bill is unlikely until we see a major cyber crisis](#),

As it is extremely unlikely the individuals will ever see the inside of a courtroom, this action by the United States serves mostly as a wake-up call. Cyberattacks against companies and government entities are rising, but the ownership still falls on the companies and government agencies to handle the problem.

(Source: [U.S. Department of Justice](#))